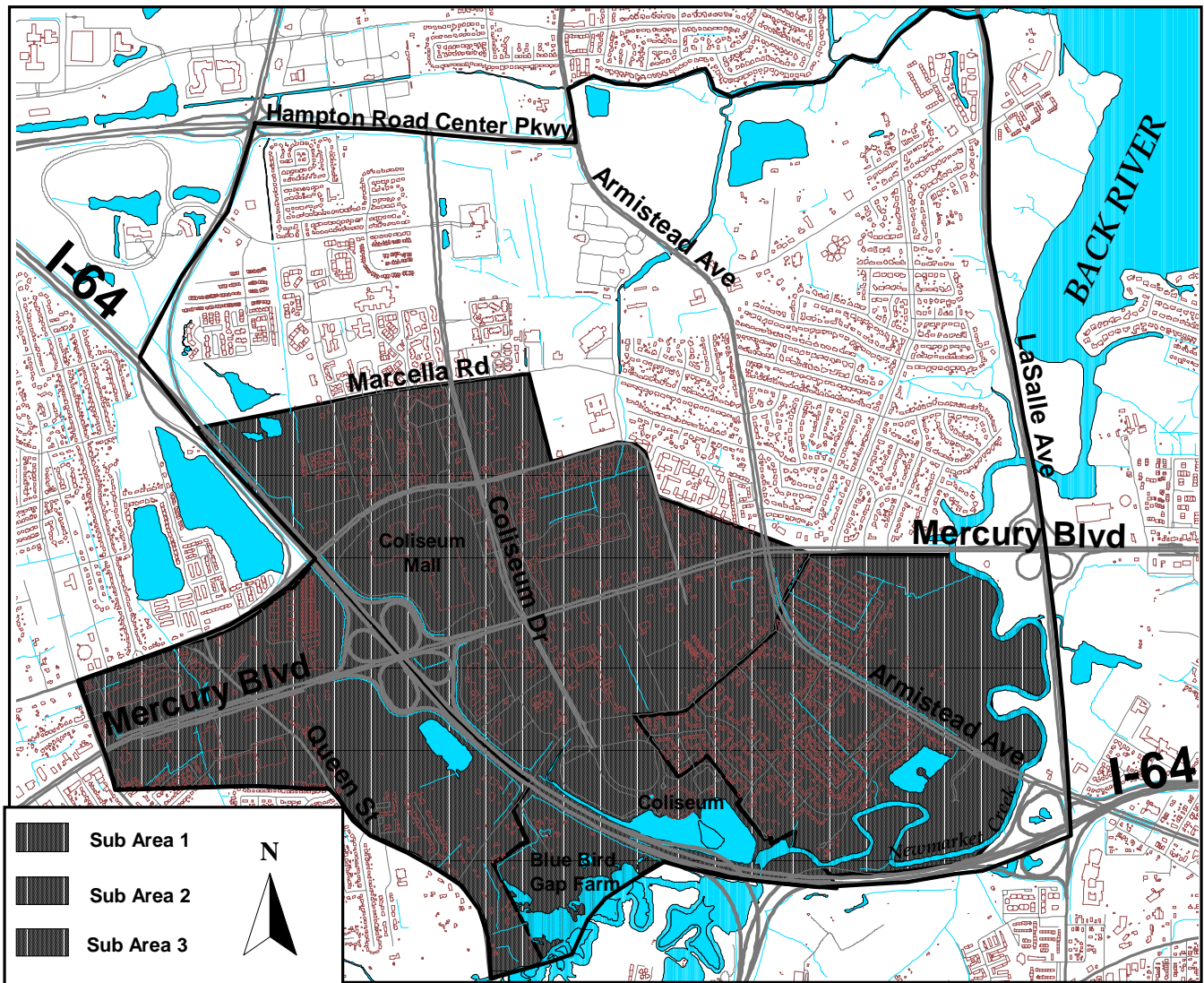


MERCURY CENTRAL PLAN (Adopted March 19, 1994)

The formulation of the Mercury Central Plan is part of the process for the development and implementation of general policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan. Given that the Comprehensive Plan is a very broad based document that addresses the general issues and policies relative to the physical development of the city as a whole, the Mercury Central Plan seeks to review, analyze, clarify, and augment these policies through citizen participation from the affected neighborhood. Once completed, the Mercury Central Plan serves as a mutually reinforcing document to the Comprehensive Plan. It becomes the primary policy guideline for public decisions in the Mercury Central vicinity. Future changes and modifications to the Mercury Plan should undergo public input, public hearings, and eventual endorsement by both the Planning Commission and City Council.



The Mercury Central Plan encompasses the geographic area bounded by LaSalle Avenue, Hampton Roads Center Parkway, Queen Street, Aberdeen Road, and Interstate 64.

Goals of the Mercury Central Plan

- Formulate a community-based vision for the future development of the Mercury Central area that balances residential and commercial priorities.
- Review and evaluate the Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the Mercury Central area.
- Identify long term development strategies for key public assets.
- Establish goals and objectives for both public and private actions to enhance the commercial/retail sector within Mercury Central.

Summary of Land Use Recommendations

- Formulate and adopt a plan for Mercury Central to ensure its place as a dominant regional retail/commercial district.
- Implement area-wide rezonings to reflect the area's commercial/mixed-use future, eliminating most single-family zoning.
- Adopt a mixed-use/retail zoning district to enhance Mercury Central's role in the region.
- Prepare a land use study for the area south of Pine Chapel Road (Mercury Central South) in anticipation of the changes to occur once the Interstate 664 extension is implemented.
- Acquire "urban park" sites in Mercury Central North and Mercury Central South.

Summary of General Recommendations

- **SUBAREA 1** – Area is bounded on the north by Mercury Boulevard and Pine Chapel Road; on the east by Newmarket Creek; on the south by Interstate 64 and Newmarket Creek; and on the west by the eastern property line of the Hampton Coliseum.

- The Comprehensive Plan should be amended to designate certain neighborhoods along Armistead Avenue south of Mercury Boulevard as low-density residential. The remaining areas should remain as currently designated.
- In recognition that commercial pressure may still occur in the neighborhoods recommended for residential designation, a procedure is recommended to ensure that if and when proposals for commercial development occur, there is collective community decision to allow such a change.
- Recommendations currently in the Comprehensive Plan regarding Pine Chapel village should be followed.
- The Interstate 664/ Armistead Avenue connector road should be constructed in the general alignment currently recommended in the Comprehensive Plan.
- **SUBAREA 2** – Area is bounded on the north by Cunningham Drive and Todds Lane; on the east by Interstate 64 and the western property line of Bluebird Gap Farm; on the south by Newmarket Creek and the southern property line of Mercury Plaza Shopping Center and properties fronting Mercury Boulevard; and on the west by Queen Street and Aberdeen Road.
- The Comprehensive Plan should be amended to designate the residential area in the vicinity of C.C. Spaulding Drive as commercial/mixed use. Any future changes should be subject to the same criteria recommended for Windsor Terrace and Wilken Park.
- A corridor should be preserved for the proposed Queen Street/Magruder Boulevard connector road. This road should meet the following criteria:
 - Its primary function should be to move traffic between the southern and northern halves of the city.
 - It should be a limited access facility.
 - It should be designed as a parkway.
 - The alignment chosen should offer the maximum protection for existing residential areas.
 - Vacant property should be used rather than developed property.
 - There should be no access to Mercury Boulevard.
- Weaver road should not be widened; the proposed extension should be deleted from the comprehensive Plan.
- **SUBAREA 3** – Area is bounded on the north by Marcella Road, Cunningham Drive and Mercury Boulevard; on the east by the western property line of Thomas Eaton Middle School, Cunningham Drive, and the eastern property line of the Hampton

Coliseum; on the south by Pine Chapel Road, Interstate 64, and Newmarket Creek; and on the west by the western property line of Bluebird Gap Farm and Interstate 64.

- The following principals should guide any future efforts to revise development controls for Mercury Central:
 - A wide range of uses should be allowed as long as “high quality development” can be insured.
 - Better development standards are needed for Mercury Central to become a “showplace.” Such standards should include signage, street landscaping, building setbacks, design review process, and improvements to Mercury Boulevard.
- The realization of the goal of making Mercury Central a “showplace” will require the cooperative and complementary efforts of both private and public interests. Some of these responsibilities are as follows:

Private efforts

- form a group of business owners to compile a design guideline booklet
- encourage monument-type signs
- initiate a design review process
- improve landscaping along streets
- address building setbacks

Public efforts

- expedite improvements to Mercury Boulevard
 - enhance street landscaping
 - work with businesses to revise ordinances
 - create a pedestrian system
 - implement a directory system
 - install distinctive street lights
 - work toward underground utilities
 - create distinctive designs for public signs
 - reduce maximum area for freestanding signs
- Initiate a “top-notch” trolley to link the hotels with the retail areas in Mercury Central and Downtown.
 - A group of business leaders and landowners should be formed immediately to implement the recommendations listed above and consider the following:
 - Develop a joint public/private marketing effort for Mercury Central as a district.

- If any public/private loan program is considered, it should be discussed at some length with the public. Such a program may have merit, but most homeowners do not understand why the City should even consider such a program.
- Initiate the following efforts to improve public safety:

Private efforts

- increase lighting in parking lots
- use of video cameras
- formation of a “business crime watch”

Public efforts

- education programs
 - school programs for children
 - television programs for adults
 - Police Division design consultation for property owners
- Implement the following recommendations in regard to public facilities:
 - Coliseum
 - The Coliseum currently accommodates a wide variety of events that contribute positively to the quality of life of Hampton residents; this approach should be continued.
 - Large-scale expansion of the facility seems financially infeasible and should probably not occur.
 - A joint public/private group (possibly the aforementioned business organization) should investigate other attractions or facilities which would complement the Coliseum.
 - Bluebird Gap Farm
 - The land occupied by Bluebird Gap Farm should remain in public/quasi-public land use. A Living Museum type attraction would be desirable, or some other family oriented theme park.
 - The Bluebird Gap Farm facilities should be retained in the city as a valuable educational and recreational experience. If this use is not included in whatever expanded use is eventually proposed for the site, it should be relocated to a suitable, accessible location and be maintained in the same magnitude as exists at the current site.

For more information or a copy of the plan, please contact the Hampton Planning Department at (757) 727-6140.